

*Against Judging and Censuring.*

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A  
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the

Q U E E N

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W I N D S O R,

On SUNDAY, *August 31.* 1707.

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By SYMON PATRICK, M. A. *K*

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SEERMON

COLLEGE



WINDSOR

On Sunday, August 31, 1897

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R o m. XIV. 10.

*But why dost thou judge thy Brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.*

**S**T. Paul in this Epistle to the Romans largely asserts the Doctrine of Justification through the Righteousness of Faith, without the Works of the Law; and explains the Mystery of God's calling the Gentiles to Salvation, and adopting them by Grace to be his Children in the room of the Ismaelites, to whom pertained the Adoption and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the Giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises; whom notwithstanding God rejected, because they had a Zeal for God, but not according to Knowledge; for they being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, submitted not themselves unto the

Rom. 9. 4.

10. 2, 3.

*Righteousness of God: They sought it not by Faith, but as it were by the Works of the Law: For they stumbled at that Stumbling-stone: Yet are they not reprobated for ever; for the Apostle tells us, That Blindness is in part happen'd unto Israel, until the Fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

Rom. 9.  
32.

11. 25.

This being premis'd, it will not be thought strange that there should happen frequent Disputes and Dissentions between the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Converts; the former on the one hand tenaciously observing the Law of *Moses*, and condemning the *Gentiles* for neglecting it; they on the other hand despising the Weakness of the *Jews* in thinking themselves oblig'd to the observance of that Part of the *Mosaical* Law, which Christ by the New Covenant had abolish'd. For this Unchristian dealing with one another, in a particular Controversy they had about eating of Meats, which is related in the beginning of this Chapter, the Apostle reproves them Both in the Words of my Text; To the *Jew*, saith he, *Why dost thou judge thy Brother?* And to the *Gentile*, *Why dost thou set at nought thy Brother?* And then to convince them of the Sinfulness and Unreasonableness of such Practices, he argues with them from the

the Doctrine of a Future Judgment, in the Words that follow; *We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.*

It is too plain to need any Proof, That this Prohibition of the Apostle's is not a limited one to the Times he liv'd in, or the particular Circumstances of those he wrote to : And it is also too notoriously true to be denied, That Judging, Censuring and Despising each other, are so far from being thought Vices by the generality of Men, that they often serve as an Entertainment to pass away Time, and are the ordinary Topicks of their common Conversation. I shall therefore beg leave in the following Discourse,

I. To shew wherein this judging of our Brethren that is Criminal, does consist, and how unreasonable and sinful a Practice it is.

II. I shall endeavour to find out the Causes from whence it does proceed. And

Thirdly and lastly, I shall use some Arguments to dissuade you from it; and particularly enforce, as far as I am able, that weighty one of the Apostle's in my Text.

I. Then

I. Then, this judging here blam'd by St. Paul, consists in an Usurpation of Authority over others, that does by no means belong unto us; in taking upon us to pass Sentence of Condemnation upon our Brethren, whenever, according to the Rule of our own Notions, they err either in Opinion or Practice; thereby presuming to determine for other People what they shall think, and how they shall act. This is highly blameable if it went no farther: But Men who give themselves so much Liberty, seldom stop here, but proceed to harsh Censuring, Railing, Reviling and bitter Accusations, to the manifest Breach of that Charity so earnestly recommended throughout the whole Gospel. Now the unreasonable Arrogance of this Practice will plainly appear, if we do but consider, how incapable by Nature the very best and wisest of us are, of this Judging Employment, which the Weakest are often fond of undertaking. And first, we may observe, how far it lies out of our reach to judge others for their Opinions; to which Task we are not equal, unless we could know the Secrets of Men's Hearts, and pry into the inmost Recesses of their Souls, to discover whether their

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Notions proceed from a true, real and sincere Conviction of Mind, or whether they perversly maintain them out of Obstinacy, Pride, Partiality, Self-interest, or any other evil Design. Now if it be impossible for us to know this, as most certain it is, what do we less when we condemn our Brethren, than put our selves in the place of God ; since an All-knowing Faculty only, which belongs to him alone, can qualify us to be competent Judges of other Men ? How then can all the immoderate Zeal and ungovern'd Heat with which Men are apt to prosecute each other about the least difference in Opinion, be justified ? Could we be sure always to be in the right in our Censures, and consequently free from injuring others by false Imputations, it were another matter ; but instead of that, how often do we suffer our selves to be led by bare Conjectures, in the room of Certainty and Demonstration ; and how common is it for an idle groundless Tale to weigh as much with us, as the most unquestionable Truth, rather than this pernicious Licentiousness shall not be gratify'd ? Which will appear to be still more unreasonable, when we consider what the ground of our Displeasure is, when we judge our Brethren

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for their Opinions ; and it is really in effect no more than this, we are angry because they do not think in every think exactly as we do ; which is the most frivolous Cause of Offence that can be imagin'd. For, first, God has not given all Men the same Understanding, some Apprehensions being fitted for a quick and ready Conception of things, which may extreamly puzzle others, who are not endued with the same Parts and Abilities ; and this is very evident from common Experience in all Employments whatsoever. Again, although we should suppose all Men equally capable, a different Representation of one and the same thing may occasion different Sentiments about it. All have not the same Education, nor the same Opportunity of informing themselves ; and there are many things which the generality of Men can have no Notion at all of, but from the Relation of others, which does not always agree in every Circumstance, and consequently must unavoidably create diversity of Opinion. In a word, since it is impossible for us to know the secret Springs that inwardly move Men, unless we will pretend to be equal with God ; and since it is a Liberty common to all Mankind to make use of their own Reason

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in the choice of their Opinions ; although we be ever so sure we are in the right our selves, if we Condemn and Censure those who do not agree with us, for their Errors and Mistakes, we are guilty of a high Presumption towards God, and of an inhuman and unchristian Treatment of our Brethren.

I shall now proceed to examine what better Grounds we have to go upon, when we judge others for their Actions. And although this Practice do something differ from the former, yet is it in many respects liable to the same Objections, and equally worthy of blame. It must be own'd that Mens Actions do lie much more within the compass of our Understandings, than their Thoughts, and may therefore seem to be proper Objects of our Judgment ; but herein if we do not use the utmost Caution, nay, if we do, we may be often mistaken, and consequently often incur the Guilt of laying False Accusations to the Charge of our Brethren. There are many things a Man may do which in themselves are perfectly indifferent, and become either good or evil, according as the Ends and Purposes are to which they are directed ; and here we are as much at a loss to judge

as in the former Case ; for the Consequences of such Actions will not help us out, but rather more confound us ; there being nothing more common than for Noble and Good Designs to prove abortive thro' Cross Events, occasion'd by unforeseen Accidents. Herein therefore if we judge, we may perhaps unwarily condemn even God himself, whose especial Providence may have occasion'd what we so much blame; or if we do not that, at least we find fault with Men for what they cannot help, than which nothing can be more unreasonable.

Secondly, Prejudice before entertain'd, either as to Things or Persons, may often lead us out of the way in our Judgments, by reason of the strong byass it usually has upon our Minds. This may make us rashly censure Men as great Offenders, when perhaps they think that which we so severely condemn their indispensable Duty to perform : Nay, it has sometimes so strange an Influence upon us, that it perfectly blinds our Reason to such a degree, as not to suffer us to distinguish between Right and Wrong; and then Good may, and often does pass

pass for Evil, and Evil for Good. This was the Case of the Blinded *Israelites*, who after they had seen that Amazing Miracle which God wrought by *Moses*, in causing the Earth to open her Mouth, and swallow up *Korah* and his Company, on the morrow murmured against him and *Aaron*, saying, *Ye have killed the People of the Lord.* <sup>Num. 16. 41.</sup>

This also carried the *Jews* to that prodigious degree of Impiety and Blasphemy against our Blessed Saviour, as to make them attribute the Wonderful Works which he did by the Spirit of God, to the Power of the Devil, rather than part with the invincible Prejudice they had conceived against him and his Doctrine. Since then the Actions of the Son of God himself, who was the Perfection of Purity and Holiness, were subject to so great a Misinterpretation through Partiality, how much more may the Actions of our Brethren be so by the same Means? And how carefully ought we to avoid this Dangerous Practice, rather than follow it with the Industry that many do, as if it were really a part of their Business and Duty.

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But it may be demanded, Whether there are not some Cases wherein we are at liberty to judge, without being guilty of that sort of Judging here prohibited by the Apostle? To which I answer affirmatively, That there are, and some wherein we should be rather guilty if we did not. For Instance: If Men publickly deny the Being of a God, or openly call in question any Fundamental Article of our Holy Christian Faith; if they live in a notorious habitual Course of Vice and Immorality, as if it were in defiance to God's Commands, What Good Man will not be excited by his Zeal for God and Religion to express his Indignation at such Enormities? And in this we are safe, for we do but judge what God himself has judged already; we cannot be mistaken, for we only repeat the Sentence he has pronounced against all that work Iniquity: But even in this sort of Judging we may be very faulty, if it be occasion'd by any other Motive than a True Sincere Zeal for God and his Holy Laws. If we are griev'd with a Godly Sorrow for the Wickedness of our Brethren, out of a Tender Concern for the Welfare of their Souls; if we hate their Vices, and not their Persons; we do what is well  
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pleasing in the sight of God : But if on the contrary we take a Malicious Pleasure in observing their Failings, and are forward to expose them, either because we don't love them, or to promote some End or Design of our own in it, their Faults will not justify our Censures, but they will be as criminal as if they were wholly without Cause.

I cannot leave this Head, without taking notice of one sort of Judging, which as it is by far the most unreasonable, so is it the most dangerous of any; I mean that strange and unaccountable Liberty that is taken by all Ranks and Degrees of Men, of Judging their Superiors and Governors. It well deserves an Entire Discourse by it self, to shew the preposterous Folly and Arrogance, nay, I think I may say, Impudence of this Mischievous and Insolent Behaviour. But I shall in this Place only observe, that the Reasons I have urg'd against judging our Equals, do hold more strongly in relation to our Superiors; and that as the Presumption and Rashness of the one has been shewn to be very great, so is that of the other still much greater; and they who are guilty of it do well deserve the Character St. Jude gives them, of Filthy

Dreamers <sup>Jude, ver.</sup> 8.

*Dreamers, that despise Dominion, and speak evil of Dignities.*

I come now to the *Second* thing I propos'd, which was to enquire into the Causes that occasion this Judging, here reprehended by the Apostle. And the first I shall mention is, a decay of that brotherly Love and Affection which is made by our Saviour so essential a part of our Duty, that whosoever is without it cannot be so much as called a Christian. *This is my commandment*, says he, in the 15th Chapter of St. John's Gospel, at the 12th Vers, *That ye love one another, as I have lov'd you.* And he express'd his Love to us in the greatest Instance that it was possible to give of it; as it follows at the 13th Verse, *greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend:* And St. John assures us in his General Epistle, Chap. 3d. v. 23, 24. *This is his commandment, (that is, God's) that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.* And in the 4th Chapter at the 7th and 8th Verses,  
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Beloved, says he, let us love one another ; for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God : He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love. If then this Spirit of Love did dwell in our Hearts, it would be impossible for us to judge and condemn each other with Severity ; for Love produceth Charity, which is an infallible Preservative against this Vice. Charity is kind, disposing us to be tender-hearted towards others, to make allowances for their Actions, to put the most favourable Construction upon them that can be, and to extenuate their Faults rather than aggravate them. It is not rash, as the Word is render'd in the Margin of our Bibles, not given to form hasty and ill-digested Conclusions, but to weigh Matters with Calmness and Soberness of Reason. It thinketh no evil, is not ready to entertain unkind or unjust Suspicions of Men, or suddenly to give Credit to any loose Report of their Miscarriages ; but hopeth all things, still inclining to think the best in every thing that is subject to a doubtful Interpretation. In short, it is so directly opposite to Censoriousness, that as long as we cherish and keep alive this lovely Virtue in our Minds, we are out of danger

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of being guilty of it; but if we suffer it to languish and wax Cold, we may by degrees quite lose it; and then its contrary Qualities of Hatred, Malice and Ill-Will will enter into our Hearts, and fill us with all Wrath, Emulation, and Bitterness; and when we are thus set on Fire of Hell, it will be no wonder if we judge our Brethren, and do the Devil's Work in the World, by breaking the Bonds of Natural Affection, Unity and Charity, and promoting Quarrels, Divisions and Dissentions.

A Second Cause of Judging, is Pride and Self-conceit. When Men are full of a vain Imagination of something that is Great and Extraordinary in themselves, and have a high Conceit of own Understanding, it is natural to them to make themselves the Standard and Test of Truth, and to assume a Power of condemning every body that thinks or acts differently from them: The haughtiness of their Temper will not let them bear with any Opposition, but the least Contradiction inflames them and provokes them to censure sharply those that offer it, and to treat them with Contempt and Disdain. But Christian Humility

mility will inspire us with other Sentiments, it we will observe the Precepts of the Gospel', and *not think too highly of our selves, but think soberly*; if <sup>Rom. 12. 3.</sup> we will learn of our Saviour, as he exhorts us, who was *meek and lowly in heart*: Such a Disposition of Mind will create in us a Modest Diffidence in our selves, which will restrain us from Judging others. A Man of a true humble Spirit, that is deeply sensible of the many Imperfections and Infirmities he finds in himself, will make Allowances for the same in other Men; and their Frailties, which the Proud make an occasion of Triumph, will be rather Objects of his Pity and Compassion. These I have mention'd I take to be the two chief Causes of Censoriousness; which does sufficiently shew the Odiousness of this Vice, since it appears to be utterly inconsistent with the two greatest Duties, and most ornamental Graces of the Christian Religion.

I come now in the *Third* and Last Place to use some Arguments against this Practice. And

1<sup>st</sup>. It is such a Usage as every body resents when it comes to be their own Case: *Whatsoever*

Matth. 7.  
12. *ye would, says our Saviour, that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.* Now which of us is there, that would be willing to submit their Actions to the examination of those who have nothing to do to call them to account, and to have every thing they say or do canvas'd by Idle Meddlers and Busy-Bodies? How heinously especially do we take it when we are maliciously traduc'd by groundless Calumnies, and falsly accus'd of Crimes we never were guilty of? Let us therefore follow this admirable Rule our Blessed Lord has given us, and not deal so unfairly as to take a Liberty with other Men, which we think so injurious with regard to our selves.

A Second Argument against it, is the great Trouble and Vexation it necessarily engages us in, to the disturbance of that Peace and Repose in which every one would chuse to pass his Time here upon Earth. How destructive it is of Christian Charity has been shewn; but it goes farther, and breaks even the ordinary Commerce of Common Society. If we judge others, we must expect to have it retaliated upon our selves; and this begets Enmity and Strife, which commonly  
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ends in a Cessation not only of Mutual Love, but also of all Conversation with each other. And it cannot be otherwise, if we consider that a Common Censurer is, as it were, in a profess'd state of War with all Mankind: With those of his own Temper he is perpetually clashing and quarrelling; others shun and avoid him as they would a Pestilence, for their own safety and security. To be thus depriv'd of the Benefit of all Friendly Society, is a State, one would think, of such Uneasiness and Torment, that all who are in it should cry out with Wicked Cain, *My Punishment is greater than I can bear*; unless we can suppose any one to be so entirely divested of Humanity, as to prefer the Life of a Brute Beast before that of a Rational Creature. Gen. 4. 13

*Lastly,* Let us press upon our Hearts the serious Consideration of the great and weighty Argument of the Apostle's in my Text, *For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.*

He is the great Lord and Master of us all, and to his own Master every one standeth or falleth, as the Apostle speaks in the 4th Verse of this Chapter;  
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1 Cor. 4. 5. *Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts; and then shall every man have Praise of God. To him therefore, who alone is sufficient for it, belongs this Work; to him all Hearts are open, and no Secrets are hid, and all those Cunning Shifts and Artifices by which Men easily may, and frequently do impose upon each other, are clear and evident to his All-seeing Eye, who trieth the very Hearts and Reins, and understandeth our Thoughts long before.* There is nothing can escape the Comprehension of his Infinite Knowledge, all the Thoughts and Actions of all Men are noted in his Book, and will be remembered by him at the great Day of his Appearing, when he

Matt. 24. *shall come in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great*  
30. *Glory, to judge the World in Righteousness, and the People with Equity.* His Holy, Eternal and Immuta-  
Psal. 98. 9. *ble Laws are those by which we must be judged;*  
Jam. 1. 17. *in him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*  
God is not a Man, that he should lie, neither the Son  
Num. 23. *of Man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and*  
19. *shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he*  
Psal. 111. *not make it good? All his Commandments are sure, they*  
7, 8. *stand*

*stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in Truth and Uprightness.* We can receive no Injury at his Hands, he is without Partiality, but delighteth in Mercy, and would not the death of a Sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. Since then it hath pleas'd God to declare in his Holy Word, That he has appointed a Acts 17.  
*Day in the which he will judge the World in righteousness* 31. by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all Men, in that he hath rais'd him from the dead; and that he Rom. 2.6.  
*will render unto every man according to his Deeds;* Good to those that have done Good, and Evil to those that have done Evil; Thou art inexcusable, Rom. 2.7.  
*O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest.* Who art 14. 4.  
*thou, says the Apostle, that judgest another man's Servant?* And who are we that judge our own Fellow Servants, when we our selves are equally accountable with them to one common Master? What an intolerable Presumption, and what an outrageous Affront is it to God, thus to invade his Prerogative, and to trample upon his Commands, by assuming a Power he hath absolutely debarr'd us from! How will he deal with us for this, when we come to give an Account of our selves at the great Day  
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before his dreadful Tribunal? Shall he not judge us because we have *judged*; and condemn us, because we have *condemned*? Yes, most surely; all the severe Sentences, all the rigid Censures we have pass'd against our Brethren, will prove so many Coals of Fire which we have heap'd upon our Heads: *For with what judgment ye judge, says our* Matt. 7. 2. *Saviour, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measur'd to you again.* Consider, I beseech you, that it is a terrible thing thus to fall into the Hands of the Living God, to provoke his Wrath against us, and cause his whole Displeasure to arise; to shut up his Bowels of Compassion from us, by shewing none to others; to aggravate all our other Sins and Miscarriages, by such an addition to them. On the other side, if we are candid and favourable, if we make Phil. 4. 5. *our moderation known unto all men, as the Apostle exhorts us, what an unspeakable Satisfaction will it be to us to leave the World, with a comfortable Assurance, that God will deal with us as we have dealt with others; and that as we have used Clemency towards our Brethren, so we may also expect to find Mercy our selves in the sight of our great Judge Christ Jesus.* I hope by this time

time it does appear, that this Sin of Judging each other is no slight or trifling Matter, no proper Subject of Diversion and Raillery, but on the contrary, highly offensive to God, and very dangerous to our Souls; and that consequently it is of the greatest Importance imaginable to us to avoid it: And there is a way of doing it with infinite Profit and Advantage, and that is by *judging our own selves*, which we are both capable of performing and in Duty oblig'd to do; and if it be done carefully and exactly it will allow us but little Leisure or Opportunity to enquire into the Faults of others; for there are few of us but may find Employment enough of this nature if we look at home. A strict Self-Examination is no easy thing, but requires Time, and will wholly take up those idle Hours, which are often so much worse spent in seeking Occasions of Blame against our Brethren, for want perhaps of something else to do. When we find a Disposition in us to censure others, let us turn it upon our selves; and

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herein we have Liberty, if we don't want Inclination, to indulge it as much as we please ; we cannot conceive too great an Abhorrence of our own Faults, nor be too severe in condemning our selves for the Commission of them ; for that Rigor and Sharpness which is Criminal when used to wards others, becomes Commendable when apply'd to our selves.

Let us therefore lay aside all Partiality and Fondness to our selves, which ( as I before observ'd ) perfectly blinds our Judgment ; and let us with Sincerity examine our own Hearts , and search deep into our Consciences, which will not deceive us if we do not deceive our selves : Let us *see well if there be any way of wickedness in us*, and by a speedy and true Repentance return unto God ; thus shall we not only avoid the Guilt of judging others, but also by judging our selves, live in a constant Preparation for the Judgment which is to come, in a sure Hope, and firm Confidence  
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in the Promises of God, and not be deceiv'd in the Expectation of our Hope, but inherit Eternal Life, through the Merits and Satisfaction of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To whom with the Father, and Holy Spirit, be ascribed all Honour and Glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

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